



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

January 11, 2008

Mike Knapp, President of County Council
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th floor
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) at National Naval Medical Center (NNMC)

Dear Mr. Knapp:

On January 10, 2008 the Montgomery County Planning Board heard public testimony on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for BRAC. The Board endorsed the staff recommendations regarding the DEIS in the attached memorandum and this letter highlights those elements of greatest concern to the Board, including elements of implementation beyond the DEIS process itself.

The Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda will serve a critical part of the mission to provide health care for our nation's men and women returning from combat. As we have seen during the past year, the Walter Reed facility is not just an element affecting the county, State, or region, but rather is of national significance. We therefore believe the federal government needs to take a more active role in establishing the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as a first-class medical center that helps to restore our nation's pride in our ability to care for our troops. This role requires sufficient funding to ensure that patients, visitors, and employees all have good choices for lodging and access to the site.

Unfortunately, the DEIS does not contain the detailed information needed to develop the specific recommendations regarding housing, transportation, or site layout that would facilitate the establishment of a first-class facility. In particular, additional information is needed on patient and visitor needs for access and lodging and on how specific Transportation Management Plan objectives and programs will be tailored to meet those needs.

The Transportation Management Plan needs to consider all feasible land use and modal alternatives available to serve employees and visitors. We urge the Federal government to provide strong leadership in reducing reliance on auto travel; a short-term need given the levels of traffic congestion in Bethesda that supports a long-term mission to address broader concerns of energy cost and greenhouse gas emissions. The cost of both transportation and housing for visitors needs to be incorporated into consideration of increased on-site lodging. Excellent access to Metrorail is paramount, including both a station entrance on the east side of Rockville Pike and convenient connections between the campus gate and key buildings. Available

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information in the DEIS suggests that many more parking spaces are proposed than are really needed, particularly with additional on-site housing and an emphasis on alternative travel modes.

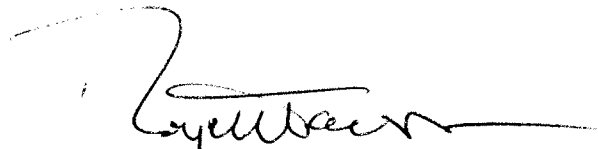
More attention must be paid to the environmental resources on the site. To provide guidance on optimal site layout and impact minimization we need information regarding stream valley buffer protection and the degree to which the site layout will comply with state and local forest conservation requirements. We urge the federal government to provide leadership in committing to green building technologies for both design and construction.

The need for additional information is infused throughout the attached staff recommendations. We trust that much of this information can be incorporated into the Final Environmental Impact Statement. But perhaps the most important recommendation is that we continue to participate in site development through our mandatory referral process. Continuing interaction with adjacent communities through a more formal liaison process would also streamline public involvement.

Finally, we believe the federal government should reconsider its assessment of impacts mitigation responsibility. For many BRAC actions across the nation, the introduction of new jobs into a community is a needed economic boost to an area where infrastructure capacity is underutilized. For instance, the funding limitations of the Defense Action Roads program may make sense in many such areas; they do not translate well to the failing state highways serving the NNMC campus.

A common theme of the testimony we heard was that adjacent communities would be proud to welcome the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center as long as it proves to be a good neighbor. We believe this good-neighbor objective is possible, and look forward to continuing coordination on this critical project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Royce Hanson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Royce Hanson
Chairman

RH:DH:tc

Attachment

CC: Marcel C. Acosta, AICP, Acting Executive Director